

New Hampshire Special Education Program Approval Report

SAU 44

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Final Report

September 10, 2001

Visit Conducted on:

December 5-6, 2000

Team Members:

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Students with Disabilities

(Commendations, Citations and Suggestions for each school)

Note: *It should be noted that suggestions are not considered corrective actions and therefore are given as technical assistance. The district is not mandated to implement them.*

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SAU 44

I. INTRODUCTION:

A New Hampshire Department of Education Special Education Program Approval visit was conducted in SAU 44 comprised of the following schools: SAU 44 Preschool Program, Northwood Elementary School, Nottingham Elementary School, Strafford Elementary School and placement of students at Dover High School. The visiting team met on December 5-6, 2000 in order to review the status of special education services provided to eligible students.

Activities related to this evaluation included the close review of all the teaching certifications of special education staff, analysis of SPEDIS data and random inspection of student records. Interviews were held with the Special Education Director, building principals, regular and special education teachers, related service personnel and administrators as time and availability permitted. In addition, the team conducted parent interviews via telephone. Throughout the visit, the team had full cooperation from the school personnel and this helpfulness was appreciated.

The report that you are about to read represents the consensus of all the members of the visiting team. Please keep in mind that this is a "report for exception", meaning that only exceptions to the NH State Standards have been addressed. If a component is not mentioned, that does not mean that the team did not review it; it just means that there were no citations of noncompliance to the Standards found in that particular area.

II. STATUS OF PREVIOUS ON-SITE: *Conducted on October 18-19, 1995*

SAU-Wide citations noted in 1995 were:

- 1) Ed. 1119.03(c) Develop special education curricula if needed
- 2) Ed. 1129.01 Revise policies and procedures
- 3) Ed. 1119.07(a) Employ certified staff.

The results of a review of these matters of noncompliance conducted during this visit are as follows:

- 1) Ed. 1119.03(c): A Special education curriculum was not made available to the team for those students for whom the regular education or modified regular education curriculum is inappropriate.
- 2) Ed. 1129.01: The policies and procedures of SAU 44 and its member districts continue to be out of date.
- 3) Ed. 1119.07(a): Uncertified staff continue to be employed at:
 Strafford Elementary School Speech Pathologist #0174
 SAU Preschool Program Teacher (L.B.)

III. ISSUES OF SIGNIFICANCE:

The preschool program continues to offer special education programming with one uncertified special educator on staff. The program is located off site and provides very limited experiences with non-disabled peers. SAU-wide citations have not been rectified since the 1995 evaluation.

Space and facilities requirements are not in compliance at the Northwood, Nottingham and Strafford Elementary Schools

The curriculum of each of the schools is not aligned with the New Hampshire Curriculum Frameworks. Staff need to be provided the time and resources to upgrade the curriculum and consequently increase their repertoire of teaching methods/ in order for children to meet the high standards established by the New Hampshire Curriculum Frameworks.

Special education staff may have unreasonable sized caseloads. The loads of special education staff need to be analyzed to determine if services to children are being comprised due to excessive case loads and adjusted accordingly.

IV. COMMENDATIONS, CITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS: SAU-WIDE

Name of Program(s) Visited: All

COMMENDATIONS:

- The Strafford and Nottingham Schools are commended for being family centered and having good communication with all constituencies.
- The school boards of the three districts are commended for providing the resources to employ secretaries at each of the schools. This has resulted in the ability of teachers provide more time for direct instruction and services for students.
- The employment of an assistant director of special education at the SAU level has resulted in improved efficiencies and communication throughout the system.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

Ed. 1103 & Ed. 1127 The special education policy and procedural documents and manuals of the SAU are outdated and incomplete. This results in the occurrence of error, omission and inappropriate action throughout the special education process. Assistance is available to correct these materials.

Ed. 1119.03 The curriculum at the three schools needs to be updated in accordance with the New Hampshire Curriculum Frameworks. The establishment of high standards for all students is a State initiative and applies to every district and school in New Hampshire.

Ed. 1119.06 (a)(b) Space needs at the three elementary schools do not meet requirements. This is a serious problem calling for immediate resolution.

PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

NUBER OF FILES REVIEWED: 3 Files

COMMENDATIONS:

- Coordinator is on-site which allows for oversight of the program, planning with teachers and support of students.
- There is a low turn over rate of staff allowing for consistency in programming and service delivery.
- Teachers are experienced and have worked with “typical” and special needs children.
- A variety of assessment tools are used on a regular basis.
- The evaluators attend meetings to provide their expertise to the team.
- The teacher to student ratio (1:3) is excellent and allows for small group activities.
- The staff has utilized the physical space well.
- The speech/language pathologist is a part of the program and is on site on a daily basis.
- Parent interviews indicate that parents are pleased with the program. The parent/school communication and related services are commendable.
- Staff feel that the district supports professional development.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

Ed. 1107.02 3 files: No referral paperwork in student file.

Ed. 1107.05 1 file: Evaluation not conducted within 45 days; no extension in file.

Ed. 1109.04 3 files: No meeting notices in files to show who has been invited or if parents received procedural safeguards before meeting.

Ed. 1125.04 2 files: No record or consent for placement.

CFR300.309 1 file: No documentation as to whether extended school year programming was considered.

CFR300.347 1 file: No indication of how progress will be measured.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Be more persistent in obtaining all paperwork, including referral documentation, when students transition from Early Intervention Services.
- Consider keeping copies of meeting notices in student files.
- Improve IEP development process to ensure parental input and consideration.
- Consider providing a permanent home for the program. The program changes location on a yearly basis and is not connected to a school in the district that would allow for integration opportunities.
- Consider consultation from experienced professionals in the area of autism.

- The district should explore creative ideas to assist in providing a balanced enrollment of disabled and non-disabled students. If the program was physically connected to a school, this could facilitate this process and would provide access to extra curricula activities and other programs.

NORTHWOOD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

OF FILES REVIEWED: 3 Files

COMMENDATIONS:

- Staff and service providers are dedicated and provide a child-centered environment.
- There is strong parental involvement in the special education process.
- Administration is supportive of inclusion and the special education programs. They are responsive to concerns and offer solutions.
- There are a variety of programs offered that meet individual student needs.
- There is strong collaboration among special education and regular education staff.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

Ed. 1107.02 1 file: lacked written notice to parents
CFR200.532(i)

Ed. 1109.01 1 file: IEP did not include how disability affects involvement and progress in the
CFR300.347(1)(i) general curriculum.

Ed. 1109.11 2 files: lacked evidence of regular and systematic monitoring of IEP.
CFR300.347

Ed. 1113.01 1 file: LD evaluation did not include an observation.
CFR300.542

Ed. 1115.06 3 files: lacked evidence that LRE is determined annually and meets criteria.
CFR300.552

Ed. 1119.06(b)(d) The physical space provided for special education does not meet minimal standards. The
CFR300.223 number of adults and children exceed acceptable health and safety requirements.

CFR300.347(a)(5) 3 files: IEP does not specify which modifications need to be in place for state or district
wide achievement testing.
1 file: Testing is not addressed for 1st grade student.

CFR300.346(a)(1)(i) 3 files: Parents present at meeting, but minutes are unclear if their input is considered.

CFR300.346(a)(1)(ii) 3 files: lacked evidence that recent evaluations were considered.

SUGGESTIONS:

- The high number of caseloads is negatively affecting planning time. An analysis of caseloads and schedules of special education staff should be completed and adjustments made, if warranted

NOTTINGHAM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

OF FILES REVIEWED: 4 Files

COMMENDATIONS:

- Staff are energetic, child-centered committed to integration and provide positive experiences for students.
- The school provides a caring environment with excellent communication between special education staff, regular education teachers and parents.
- The building is well maintained with good use of available space.
- The special education secretary is an asset to the school.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

Ed. 1107.02 1 file: lacked evidence of safeguards given to parents.
CFR200.532(i)

Ed. 1107.05(k) 1 file: lacked evidence process completed within 45 days; no signed extension in file.

Ed. 1107.07(c) 4 files: lacked evidence of LEA representative involvement.

Ed. 1109.01(a) 4 files: IEP lacked indication of how disability affects involvement &
CFR300.347(1)(i) progress in the general curriculum.

Ed. 1109.01(n) 4 files: IEP lacked signature of LEA representative
CFR300.347

Ed. 1111.01 2 files: IEP lacked evidence of consideration of extended school year programming.

CFR300.307(b) 4 files: lacked evidence of opportunity for student to participate in PE.

Ed. 1115.06 4 files: lacked evidence that LRE is determined annually and meets criteria.
CFR300.552

Ed. 1109.03 4 files: lacked evidence of LEA representative.
CFR300.344(a)(4)

CFR300.347(a)(5)(i) 4 files: IEP does not specify modifications need to be in place for state or district
CFR300.347(a)(5)(ii) A,B wide achievement testing if needed. If child will not participate, a statement of why
test is not appropriate and how student will be assessed.

Ed. 1125.03 4 files: Parents were not afforded the opportunity of having 14 days to make a decision
after receiving written prior notice.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Consider a special education team leader in the building to assist with problems, assist new staff, etc.
- Consider including paraprofessionals in IEP meetings, progress reviews and regular ed. and special ed. planning meetings.
- Provide ongoing professional development opportunities for all staff in the areas of behavior modifications, integration, specific disabilities, etc.
- The school would benefit from additional paraprofessional support.

- Consider having reading as part of the curriculum for 7th & 8th grades to assist in supporting reading skills of special education students.
- Include information on the student's disability in the narrative portion of the IEP.

STRAFFORD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

OF FILES REVIEWED: 3 Files

COMMENDATIONS:

- Staff work well together to provide a cohesive, inclusive program.
- Weekly consultation meeting involving regular, special education and adjunct staff is commendable.
- All staff feel a sense of pride in their efforts to provide child-centered programs for students.
- Project Adventure is a part of the curriculum for all students and an effective self-esteem building program for students.
- The practice of tutors keeping daily records that are given to the supervising teacher provides continuity the students.
- There is evidence of creative student-centered programming above and beyond what is specified in the IEP.
- School staff provide a community-based atmosphere where parents feel welcome, supported and involved.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

Ed. 1107.01 1 file: Evaluation report lacked LEA representative signature.

Ed. 1107.03 1 file: lacked evidence of LD specialist at evaluation team meeting.

Ed. 1107.07(c) 1 file: lacked evidence of LEA representative or LD specialist at determination of eligibility meeting.

Ed. 1111.01 1 file: IEP lacked evidence of opportunity for student to participate in PE.
CFR300.307

Ed. 1123.14 1 file: lacked record of disclosure.

CFR300.347(a)(5)(i) 1 file: IEP lacked statement of whether modifications needed in the administration of statewide or district-wide assessments.

CFR300.347(a)(5)(ii) 1 file: IEP lacked statement of why test is not appropriate if student will not participate in statewide or district-wide assessments.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Consider updating the IEP form to include a statement regarding evaluations.
- Limited and inadequate space is an issue for staff. The district may want to review creative solutions in this area.
- Provide additional professional development opportunities for classroom teachers in the areas of, implementation of IEPs, instructional modifications, etc.
- Increase planning opportunities for special education staff and paraprofessionals.

DOVER HIGH SCHOOL

OF FILES REVIEWED: 4 Files

COMMENDATIONS:

- Staff are Dover High School are committed to implementing programs.
- Regular education teachers are supportive of special education staff and students.
- The school has implemented a reading program that has greatly benefited all students involved.
- The department chair is a strong advocate for students.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

Ed. 1107.05(K) 1 file: lacked evidence that evaluation conducted within 45 days; no signed extension.
CFR300.532(c)(1)(ii)

Ed. 1107.08(c) 1 file: lacked LD observation.
CFR300.542

Ed. 1109.01 1 file: placement page not signed. No modifications, no short term objectives.

Ed. 1109.01(b) 1 file: IEP does not contain measurable annual goals with benchmarks or objectives.
CFR300.347(a)(2)

Ed. 1109.01(n) 1 file: lacked IEP with original parent signatures.

Ed. 1109.03 1 file: lacked evidence that parent attending IEP meeting.
CFR300.3444(a)(1)

Ed. 1109.04 1 file: lacked evidence that parents given 10-day notice of IEP meeting.

Ed. 1123.04 1 file: Record of disclosure outdated – last recorded entry is from 1997.
CFR300.563

Ed. 1125.04 2 files: lacked written consent for placement.
CFR300.552

CFR300.347(a)(7)(i-ii) 1 file: IEP lacked of how progress will be measured and how parents will be informed of child's progress toward annual goals.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Improve transfer of necessary information/student records to Dover High School.

ADDENDUM

JAMES O. MONITORING PROGRAM

SAU 44

Student File Review

Case Study Document

Reimbursement Claim Form

Case Study Addendum Form

<p style="text-align: center;">ADDENDUM JAMES O. MONITORING PROGRAM</p>

SAU 44

NUMBER OF FILES REVIEWED: 3 FILES

COMMENDATIONS:

- The special education director and her assistant are commended for their attention to the needs of students covered by the James O. Federal Court Decree

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

Ed. 1107.03(a) 2 files: lacked fully constituted evaluation teams. In both instances, the team did not include a qualified examiner when emotional handicap was determined.

Ed. 1109.01(l) 2 files: lacked transition plans for students aged 16 years and above.

Ed. 1109.01(n) 1 file: District did not request a surrogate parent for a student whose parent was not available.

Ed. 1111.01 1 file: Evidence of the consideration of ESY for a student was not available.

Ed. 1113.01 1 file: A vocational evaluation was not conducted at the time the team discussed the student's vocational interests. Student evaluated after this discussion.

Ed. 1125.03 1 file: Parents were not afforded the opportunity of having 14 days to make a decision after receiving written prior notice.